

3

Drawing Amendments

(No changes)

Remarks

Claims 1-13 and 19-24 remain in the case. Claims 14-18 stand withdrawn.

Claims 3-9, 12-13 and 19 stand allowed.

Claims 2 and 23, which are subject to objection, have been corrected by amendment in this Response. Claims 10 and 11, which as amended stand rejected on technical grounds as "single means" claims, have been corrected by deleting the word "means" and inserting the additional limitation to "exit surface" in Claim 11. These claims are presented under Counsel's assurance that the correction eliminates the problem, and makes Claims 10 and 11 allowable as corrected. The claimed combination, in a projection lithography system, of "zero power meniscus lens pair (1) as mask support for a flexible film curved mask" is novel and inventive. Even as previously claimed, these claims never filled the definition of single means claim. The rejection arose out of the "functionality" concern, because some practitioners were trying to claim "any means" to accomplish the named function, which would have eliminated the chance to invent a new way to accomplish the function. This was never the situation in this application, which rather was claimed as a projection system (which has typical system features) and the meniscus lens pair, serving as mask support for a flexible film mask. For obvious reasons having to do with the need to use different masks at different times, the mask itself is not identified as a positively-stated element in either of Claims 10 and 11. Allowance of Claims 10 and 11 is requested.

Of the claims remaining, Claim 1, 20 and 24 stand rejected.

Claim 1 has been amended to resemble Claim 2, with the exception that the curved mask is no longer positively stated as an element of the claim in Claim 1.. The reason for this is the desire to have the claim follow the habits of the industry, in which an equipment manufacturer makes the system other than the mask – and the customer makes the masks, and then uses a variety of such masks to carry out a variety of tasks in making products. The analogy is that a moving picture projector is manufactured and sold by an equipment manufacturer, after which the theater owner uses his own film library to show a variety of movies. The Examiner is asked to allow Claim 1, with utility in its capability to operate with a variety of flexible film masks.

Claims 2 and 21-23 are objected to as being based upon a parent claim not allowed. These claims have been corrected into independent form to comply with the Examiner's suggestion. The Examiner is thanked for indicating allowability as so corrected.

Accordingly, allowance of Claim 2 and allowance of Claims 21-23 are requested.

25

This completes the discussion of the claims remaining, not withdrawn. The Examiner is requested to allow all these claims and forward the patent application to issue.

Counsel apologizes for the delay in filing this response, and encloses the necessary petition and fee authorization. Counsel asks leave of the Examiner to have a telephone discussion to close out the prosecution of this important case, which is currently subject to a FINAL rejection and also has claims withdrawn subject to restriction. Accordingly, this response is being sent by facsimile, to be followed by a telephone call during the first week of June, 2006, requesting that such call be treated as a telephone interview after FINAL, with expected resolution of all concerns .

S. Kuchibhotla, K. Jain & M. A. Klosner, Inventors

By Carl C. Kling
Carl C. Kling, Attorney (Reg. 19137)